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TOWN OF NEWTOWN

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Charter Revision Commission Public Hearing and Regular Meeting held on Wednesday December 8, 2010 in the Council Chamber at the Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT.

Charter Revision Commission Chairman William Lavery called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

PRESENT: Robert Duero, John Godin, Joseph Golden, William Lavery, Carey Schierloh, Peter Spanedda, Eric Paradis.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectwoman Patricia Llodra, Legislative Council Member Kevin Fitzgerald, one member of the public, one member of the press.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Robin Fitzgerald, 24 Old Farm Hill Rd.

- Mrs. Fitzgerald thanked the commissioners for dedicating their personal time to the commission. She expressed disappointment in the public hearing being scheduled for 6:00 which she felt is a difficult time to make. She added that if the commission really wanted input from the public, they needed to schedule a later meeting. She was in agreement with the commission's decision to add advisory questions but added that without bifurcation they limit public intent and you still can't voice your opinion as a town or education supporter. She added that many towns in CT have a bifurcated budget and it has worked out for the best because people can vote for exactly what they want and it brings the town together.
- Mr. Paradis expressed concern over bifurcation if one side passes and one doesn't. Do you alter the side already passed (and dishonor the pass votes) or do nothing to the passed side which would tie the hands of the legislative council to be able to compromise between the two sides? Mrs. Fitzgerald responded that she realizes it's difficult but many people at many different meetings have supported bifurcation. There has to be a way to do it and satisfy everyone. We need elected officials who listen to the public but we don't have that now. She added that she was disappointed that no elected officials came to weigh in at the public hearing.

Kevin Fitzgerald-Legislative Council Member, 24 Old Farm Hill.

- Mr. Fitzgerald stated that he stands by his previously submitted letter to the commission. He performed a word search of the 174 emails/letters previously submitted to Legislative

Council and 25-30 mentioned bifurcation so it was an issue during the last budget referendums.

- He is disappointed with the commission's recommendation as it falls short in recognizing split preferences on how much should go to the Town or BOE. He added that the more information that comes in to the Legislative Council after a failed budget, the better and that bifurcation would have provided more.
- Mr. Paradis expressed concern over bifurcation if one side passes and one doesn't. Do you alter the side already passed (and dishonor the pass votes) or do nothing to the passed side which would tie the hands of the legislative council to be able to compromise between the two sides? Mr. Fitzgerald indicated that he would submit a formal response, but that the commission has already recommended advisory questions which are not binding.
- Mr. Lavery brought up the issue of debt service allocation and shared services. He feels that the current proposal gives the town flexibility to balance. Mr. Fitzgerald responded that the town is already sorting through finances to get the split clearer, but that is a small issue that should not stop bifurcation. He feels the finance department could figure out how to make it work.
- Mr. Spanedda brought up the current situation in Watertown, where they have a bifurcated budget that continues to fail at referendum. Elected officials know that further cuts will result in lost state funding but the public is still voting to reduce. The current proposal is not perfect, but a step in the right direction. Mr. Fitzgerald responded that without bifurcation, Newtown almost came to that point anyways with failed referendums. That risk is there whether you bifurcate or not, but it should be up to the public which way it goes.

Patricia Llodra – First Selectwoman.

Mrs. Llodra is not in favor of bifurcation. The town and BOE are currently making efforts for collaboration between town and school government, organizational analyses on redundancies, shared fields, shared services, etc. to the point where we wouldn't know how to unpack them. The Town and the BOE are partners, not competitors.

There being no further public participation, the public hearing closed at 6:45

REGULAR MEETING

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mrs. Schierloh made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 22, 2010 meeting with a technical amendment. Motion seconded and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Paradis made a motion to re-affirm the previously approved proposed revision for 6-14(a). Second by Mr. Godin. Mr. Paradis, Mr. Godin, Mr. Lavery, Mr. Spanedda, Mr. Golden, Mrs. Schierloh in favor. Mr. Duero opposed. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Golden moved to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded and unanimously carried. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:51.

Patrick M. Kelley, Clerk